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ABSTRACT

This document contains information and instruction for teachers who want to include an ECO/SOCIAL Studies approach in their teaching of social studies. ECO/SOCIAL Studies is defined as an instructional/investigative strategy that focuses and individual's attention on the continuous inter-relationships and interdependence between natural and social or manmade environments and related phenomena within the context of several overlapping lifespace environments or settings. Acting as researching social scientists, students are directly involved in data collection and analysis activities that are both school and field based. Students involved in ECO/SOCIAL Studies activities and projects act in a proactive manner to resolve perceived conflicts that affect natural and social environments, to clarify issues affecting humans and nature, to solve problems affecting the human condition and the quality of natural environments, and to better understand situations which have an impact upon the quality of lifespace environments. Two matrix boards are illustrated. One deals with humans, the other with nature. The board for cross cultural schema includes traits to be explored: social roles and status; religion; government; family units; education; division of labor; the arts; tools and weapons; technology; dress, shelter, and food; lifestyles; folkways, mores, and values; and economic system or standard of living. The natural environments schema includes physical characteristics of climate, fauna, flora, human habitation, natural resources, season, topography, water supply, and altitude. Social studies teachers must work with the local community to insure that resources become an integral part of the curriculum. (DK)

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HUMANS, NATURE, PLACES, AND THINGS

An ECO/SOCIAL Studies View of the World

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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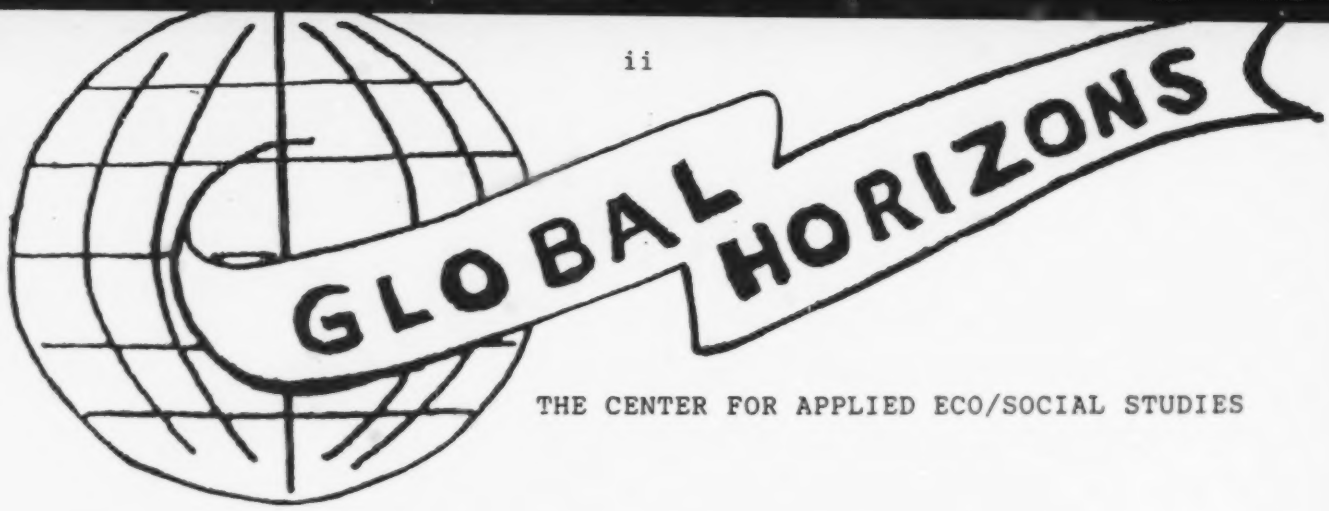
ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES

Originated by this author in 1981, the term refers to an instructional/investigative strategy that focuses an individual's attention on the continuous inter-relationships/interdependence between natural and social (human-made) environments and related phenomena within the context of several overlapping lifespace environments/settings.

Acting as researching social scientists, students are directly involved in data collection/analysis activities that are both school- and field-based.

Students involved in ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES activities and projects act in a proactive manner to resolve perceived conflicts that affect natural/social environments; to clarify issues affecting humans and nature; to solve problems affecting the human condition and the quality of natural environments; and to better understand situations which have an impact upon the quality of lifespace environments.



THE CENTER FOR APPLIED ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES

The ECO/SOCIAL Studies approach focuses attention not only on the diverse character of natural and social (human-made) environments, worldwide, but also on the day-to-day interaction and interdependence between these types of environments.

STUDENT ENVIRONMENT AWARENESS (SEA) introduces students to the nature and character of lifespace environments that are nearby/close-at-hand. These environments are experienced, directly, through the senses and are perceived to be concrete and relevant to daily life. Environmental phenomena include people, places, things, locations and sites, natural processes, inventions, institutions, and artifacts. An emphasis is placed on field-based studies/learning involving nature walks, field trips, and anthropological digs.

MAN AND HIS ENVIRONMENT (ME) program activities enable students to interact with the total lifespace environment not only in the classroom and at selected/related field-based sites but also through hiking daytrips, canoe trips, and overnight camping excursions. An emphasis is placed on active student participation in awareness/exposure activities that challenge abilities and enhance positive SELF concepts and esteem.

PEOPLE IN THEIR ENVIRONMENTS (PIE) involves students in the study of selected human groups -- past and present, worldwide, and focuses attention on the character/nature and interaction between natural/social environments. Students work in small inquiry teams and role play researching social scientists.

HUMANS/ENVIRONMENT LEARNING PROGRAM (H/ELP) provides students the opportunity to investigate conflicts, issues, problems, and/or situations that interest them. The total lifespace environment of the community, area/region, state, nation, and global village becomes a learning laboratory as phenomena is studied. Students are encouraged to be proactive; that is, to inquire, to discover, to ponder, to make decisions, and to act in constructive ways so as to resolve conflicts, to clarify issues, to solve problems, and/or to better understand situations.

A Decade of Lifespace Awareness: 1981 - 1991

Explorers of the world(s) around them

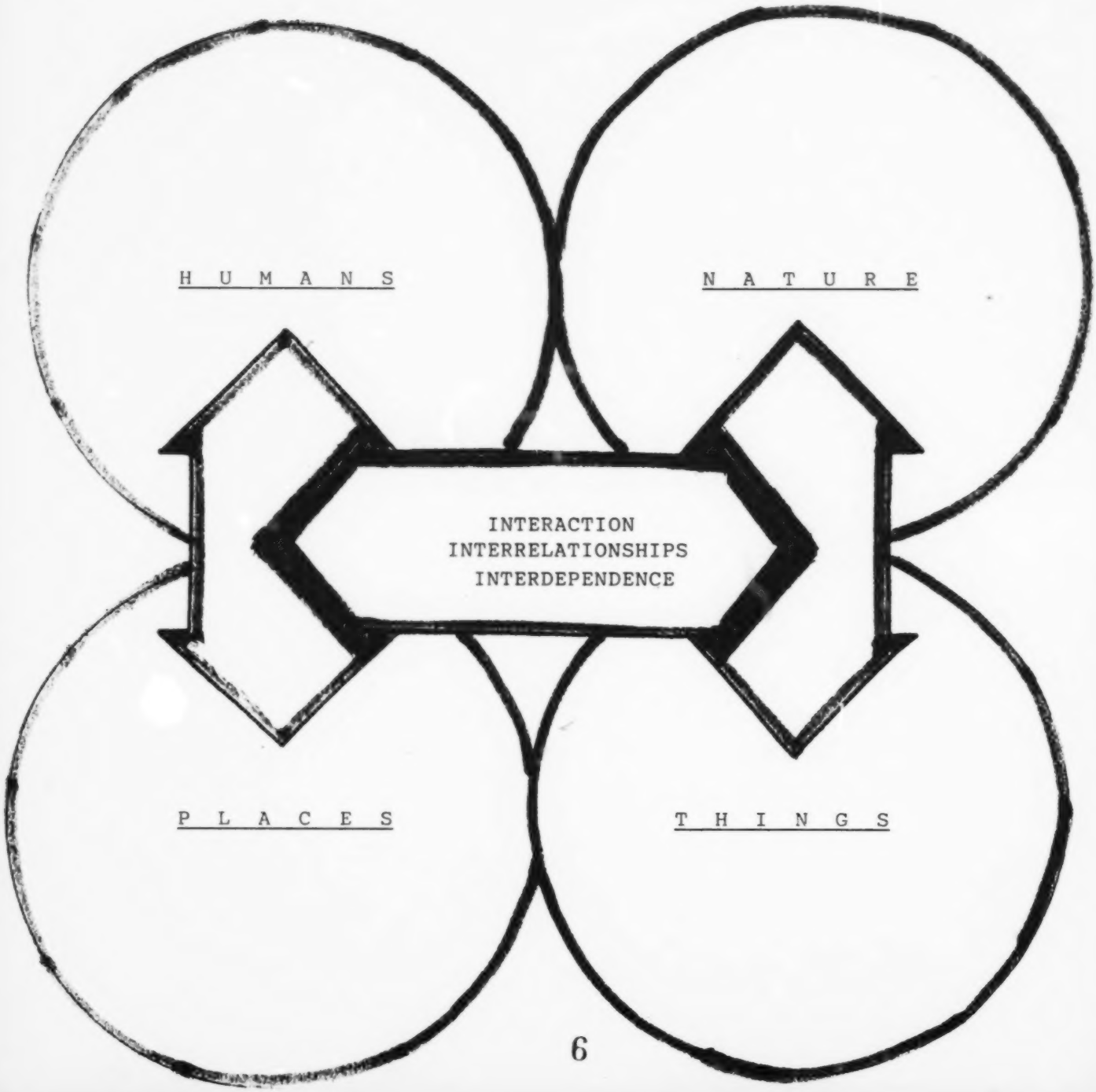
Students who are proactive change agents develop a sense of stewardship; that is, a responsibility to care for the condition of natural and social environments - and related phenomena.

ECOnauts are involved in community service activities and projects that benefit the condition of humans and nature.

These individuals are perceptive, alert, and prepared to act, if need be, to safeguard Earth's fragile environment and to lead the campaign to correct wrongs.

ECOnauts study the nature and character of diverse natural/social environments, and are committed to act in a proactive manner - in order to protect these environments against human exploitation, extreme alteration by human and natural forces, or destruction.

Collectively, these phenomena or properties comprise the total lifespace environment of any/all human beings.



HUMANS

Regardless of their languages, dress, culture traits, beliefs, histories, and accomplishments, ALL human beings are basically alike!

This is a lesson that 21st Century students must know in order for them to live/function in a global society.

It is therefore important that throughout the K-12 social studies curriculum students be introduced to/gain direct and vicarious exposure to diverse social groups - on a global scale.

Differences among human groups are obvious, e.g., appearance, dress, diet, customs, but the similarities that exist among these groups are more subtle in nature. It is knowing how these diverse groups/peoples are alike that is important for students to know.

In 1981, the International Activities Committee of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS/USA) declared that technological advances, increased trade, tourism and cultural exchanges, environmental concerns, competition for markets and scarce resources will draw nations and peoples into increasingly complex relationships in the decades ahead.

The IAC envisioned a 21st Century characterized by increased interaction among societies in a global culture that will exist along side an array of destinctive local, national, and regional cultures.

Thus, the day-to-day lives of people in all nations will be influenced by increased cross-cultural links. Individuals will be required to understand and interact with people, cultures, languages, lifestyles, and value systems unlike their own.

It is critically important that 21st Century students develop and apply social living skills to their daily lives. Such skills development will constitute the cornerstone of the K-12 social studies curriculum.

LEARNING THEIR ABCs

In order to function within the context of a 21st Century global community, students must be systematically introduced to the character and nature of diverse social groups. They must develop an Awareness of Basic Culture (ABC) traits existent within all cultures - worldwide.

As they progress through a curriculum construct that is continuous (K-12), integrated (multidiscipline), and sequential (step-by-step/grade-by-grade), students investigate the natural (ecological) and social (human-

made) aspects of diverse global cultures. In what way(s) have human groups adjusted to their physical surroundings? What are the origins of diverse value systems? What are the basic needs of ALL human beings? To what degree have human groups influenced nature? What is stewardship? In what way(s) are natural and social environments interdependent?

SAGE

The Student Awareness of Global Environments (SAGE) cross-culture matrix is designed to help students visually perceive the similarities and differences among human groups.

1. Several culture traits are identified by the social studies class.

2. Students are organized into research-oriented inquiry teams.

3. Each inquiry team selects a culture to investigate.

4. Inquiry team members collect data about the culture selected re: the several traits identified by the class.

5. Data is gathered from primary/secondary sources, e.g., print materials, visual presentations, interviews with people from the selected culture, and collected on QUIK CARDS.

6. The several QUIK CARDS are affixed to the matrix board.

Once placed on the matrix, the data collected re: several diverse cultures can be easily viewed by the class, and comparisons can be made - as to ways in which the cultures are alike/different. Discussions will form the basis of further investigations and class activities.

Whenever possible, students are taken out into the community to observe and interact with diverse cultures.

TRAITS

1 social roles and status within the group

2 religion: ceremonies/structure/authority

3 government: rules of governance/structure/offices

4 family unit functions/structure/roles

5 art/dance/literature/music/storytelling

6 education: function/purpose as well as opportunities for an education among the masses/ structure/cost/facilities/organization

7 division -of- labor: manual labor, crafts, trades

8 tools and weapons

9 technology: sophistication/utilization

10 dress/food and diet/shelter types

11 lifestyles

12 folkways/mores/values

13 economic system/standard -of- living

SEE S.A.G.E CROSS-CULTURE MATRIX SCHEMA
PAGE 7

S.A.G.E. CROSS-CULTURE MATRIX

CULTURE TRAITS

CULTURES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
A													
B													
C													
D													
E													
F													
G													

12

13

Diverse cultures and social groups resolve conflicts, clarify issues, solve problems, and comprehend situations in different ways - using different criteria and data. The value system unique to each culture/group is brought to bear upon decisions made and impressions formed.

Global cultural awareness begins close to home - within the context of the local community. Students should be exposed to cultural diversity within the immediate lifespace environment. Within the community can be found a wealth of resources; people, places, things, and events to enhance multi-cultural sensitivity.

NATURE

Within the lifespace of the local community, the surrounding region, within the county/state, across the nation, and throughout the world, there are several types of natural environments within which individuals/groups exist and prosper.

What impact does nature have upon human life-styles? Values? Attitudes and beliefs? Social interactions among people within the same group? With other peoples/groups?

Students must be formally introduced to the several types of natural environments that exist, and they must study relationships between human beings and nature; past, present, and future!

A variation of the S.A.G.E. Cross-Culture Matrix can be used in the study of diverse natural environments.

1. Several natural environment types are identified in science/social studies classes.

2. Students are organized into research-oriented inquiry teams.

3. Each inquiry team selects an environment type to investigate.

4. Inquiry team members collect data about the natural environment type selected re: the several traits identified by the class.

5. Data is gathered from primary/secondary sources, e.g., print materials, visual presentations, field trips and nature walks, and collected on QUIK CARDS.

6. The several QUIK CARDS are affixed to the matrix board.

Once placed on the matrix, the data collected re: natural environment types can be easily viewed by the class, and comparisons can be made - as to ways in which the environments are alike/different. Discussions will form the basis for further investigations in science/social studies classes.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

1 climate/temperature

2 fauna

3 flora

4 human habitation

5 natural resources

6 seasons

7 topography

8 water supply/rainfall

9 altitude

SEE NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS MATRIX SCHEMA - PAGE 12

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

ENVIRONMENT TYPES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Coastal Plains/ Seashores								
Deserts								
Forests								
Inland Plains/ Prairies								
Jungles								
Marshes/ Swamps								
Mountains								
Polar Regions								

The lifestyles, customs, beliefs, and daily routines of cultures/social groups vary from natural setting to natural setting.

While ALL human beings seek to fulfill basic needs, where one lives and how one lives effects the degree/ways that basic needs are satisfied.

Natural environment awareness begins close to home - within the context of the local community and surrounding area. Students should be exposed to these natural environments through planned activities in science/social studies classes.

Nature walks, field trips, hiking/camping trips provide exposure opportunities to students. Nature areas can be utilized as field-based classrooms or learning centers.

PLACES

Art galleries, museums, artist's studios, music halls, theatres, wooded regions, pastures, seashores, manufacturing districts, senior citizen housing, sports facilities, and college/university campuses (to mention but a few examples) provide students exposure to cultural/natural environment phenomena.

Places that reflect the character of human-made environments personify the creative style and personality of individuals and groups. These phenomena reflect the aesthetic values and quality-of-life of social groups - forever frozen in time!

Students can be directly exposed to places that are nearby/close-to-home via field trips. Excursions into the community provide students with opportunities to better understand the character of their community, and helps them to bridge perceptual gaps between the learning that takes place within the walls of the school and the everyday life of the surrounding community.

For those places that are distant/far-removed from where students are located, they can gain vicarious exposure to them via visual presentations, e.g., films, filmstrips, still photographs, slides, and video tapes.

In a few instances, visual presentations may be produced for places that are located within the local community - when direct access to them, by students, is impossible.

Guest speakers can visit classrooms or meet students at field-based sites. They can function as instructors and guides.

Social studies teachers must work with the local community to insure that resources; people, places, and things, become an integral part of the curriculum as well as instructional materials.

THINGS

A study of art objects, as cultural artifacts, enable students in the social studies to comprehend the unique differences that exist among diverse human groups - past and present.

These artifacts enable students to study/learn about social traits and value systems - as well as to discover something about the natural lifespace environment(s) in which these groups exist(ed).

For example, clay pottery, straw baskets, woolen blankets, metal tools and weapons, shell jewelry, and wooden toys say something about available materials, lifestyles, geographic location, climate, and technological development. Primitive drawings, realistic and abstract paintings, and sculptures say something about a group's concepts of beauty, grace, and style. These objects also tell us something about the way(s) diverse groups view(ed) their world.

THINGS that exist within the local community can be incorporated into the social studies curriculum, and activities/excursions can be planned around them.

For those PLACES that exist far-removed from students, they can gain vicarious exposure to them via visual presentations.

Because some students learn better when they see things that are otherwise discussed in the classroom or laboratory setting, color/motion/ sound as presented on film or video tape should be incorporated into a teacher's instructional strategy.

Events fall within the category of THINGS to be found within the context of the community. Whenever possible, community-based events should be incorporated into the social studies curriculum. Students can be taken to these events, as part of the instructional process, or they can be shown films, filmstrips, still photographs, slides, or video tapes of these 'happenings'.

COMMENTS

While HUMANS, NATURE, PLACES, AND EVENTS are separate entities, within the context of our daily lives, they exist in a state of continuous interaction. By this statement is meant that HUMANS and NATURE coexist and are interdependent for continued survival.

EVENTS are effected by HUMANS and NATURE. These happenings may be 1) a celebration of human accomplishment, 2) a ritual to honor some aspect of nature, 3) an expression of commitment to some social endeavor, 4) an acknowledgement of the importance of nature to the well-being of human groups, or 5) proactive behavior taken to resolve conflicts, clarify issues, solve problems, and/or to better understand situations that have an impact upon humans and nature.

Social studies teachers must come to recognize the variety of events that exist within the community, and must come to understand the relevance of these happenings to the academic and social development of students.

The local community is a storehouse of valuable experiences and resources that can dramatically enhance the comprehension of students about the lifespace environment; its nature and character.

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